

II. PARK PURPOSES

MISSION STATEMENT FOR THE STATE PARKS SYSTEM

The North Carolina state parks system exists for the enjoyment, education, health, and inspiration of all our citizens and visitors. The mission of the state parks system is to conserve and protect representative examples of the natural beauty, ecological features and recreation resources of statewide significance; to provide outdoor recreation opportunities in a safe and healthy environment; and to provide environmental education opportunities that promote stewardship of the state's natural heritage.

PARK PURPOSE STATEMENT

In response to local interest expressed by government units, non-profit organizations and individuals, the 1989 General Assembly authorized the Lumber River State Park and State River. The General Assembly action followed a study of the river and its corridor, public meetings and hearings, and a qualification and feasibility report on the Lumber River made to the governor and General Assembly. The report recommended adding the Lumber River to the state parks system because the river was an outstanding resource worthy of inclusion; strong local support for such action existed; and the addition of a blackwater river was consistent with and addressed a need identified in the Systemwide Plan. The Lumber River legislation called for development of a plan to "...recognize and provide for State and local government protection of the various parts of the river so as to preserve its outstanding character in perpetuity." In 1998, 81 miles of the 115-mile river were designated a national *Wild and Scenic River*.

The Lumber River's significant biological resources include the natural communities of the river, floodplains, and uplands. The floodplain of the river contains extensive examples of the bottomland, swamp, and sandbar communities typical of blackwater rivers, as well as the aquatic communities of the river channel and backwaters. Unusual upland communities include the extremely dry, barren sand hills on relict sand dune deposits at several places along the floodplain. The rare sarvis holly (*Ilex amelanchar*) is scattered along much of the river. Other rare species include woody goldenrod (*Chrysoma pauciflosculosa*), Carolina bogmint (*Macbridea caroliniana*), and American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*), as well as several species of fish. Animal life along the river is abundant and varied.

The 115-mile-long, free-flowing Lumber River offers a variety of scenic resources as it meanders through North Carolina's Coastal Plain region. Outstanding scenic views, including bottomland hardwoods, cypress-gum swamps, and upland pine forests, exist along the river's extensive undeveloped corridor. The water reflects the beautiful and peaceful shoreline and swamps. Light and dark contrast as sunlight filters through the dense forest canopy and dances

on the tea-colored water. Swamplands are broken only occasionally by higher ground and development.

The significant recreational resources of the Lumber River include the extensive length of the river corridor, opportunities for water-based recreation, the corridor's natural character, and upland areas suitable for state park development. Recreational activities - such as hiking, nature study, fishing, canoeing, camping, and picnicking - should be compatible with protection of the park's outstanding natural resources and the federal and state river designations. The Lumber River offers high quality fishing and small-craft boating and canoeing in an uncrowded setting. The river's value as a canoe trail was recognized in 1978 when the upper Lumber River was designated as North Carolina's first recreational water trail and in 1981 with its designation as a national canoe trail. In 1984, the lower Lumber River was designated as a state canoe trail. Visitors are able to experience the natural setting during single or multi-day canoe trips.

The Lumber River illustrates the geomorphic processes and landforms typical of blackwater rivers, including meanders, sandy point bars, low natural levees, sloughs, and backwaters formed by abandoned channels. It contains several examples of aeolian sand deposits, commonly associated with large rivers farther south but uncommon in North Carolina. A few outcrops along the river expose Coastal Plain formations and abundant marine fossils.

Pottery, tools, arrowheads, and other archaeological artifacts indicate that the limited high ground adjacent to the river has been in continuous use since prehistoric times. While there is potential for additional discoveries, post-Columbian agricultural and silvicultural use makes the discovery of significant undisturbed archaeological sites unlikely. Cultural features, including relict bridge abutments, tram bridges, dock pilings and canals, attest to the importance of the lumber and naval stores industries in the early development of the region.

The Lumber River Natural and Scenic River and State Park exist to preserve the beauty of the river and to protect its water quality and adjacent lands by retaining natural and scenic conditions. The Division of Parks and Recreation is charged with preserving its biological, scenic, recreational, geological and archaeological resources and providing park experiences that promote pride in and understanding of this natural heritage.